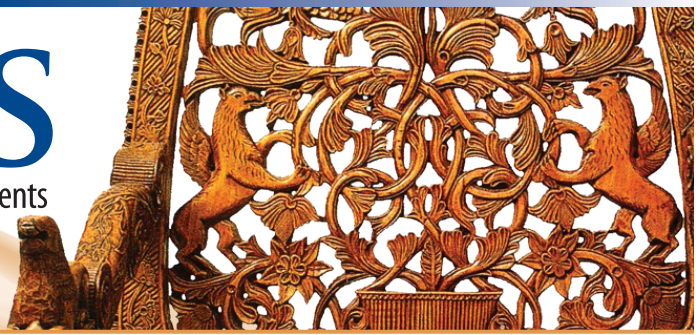


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Living in the Here & Now

By Yossi Katz

IT WAS ONE of the greatest challenges of all time, the greatest sacrifice ever asked of a man: to offer up his own son. We often explain the difficulty of Abraham's test according to the pain a loving father must endure in killing his beloved child; or because Abraham, being the worldwide leader of monotheistic religion, was being asked to do something that mimicked the lowliness of the pagan religions. But let us look deeper.

God Himself came to Abraham and asked him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham understood better than anyone else what God was all about. He knew that God is compassionate, and that everything He does is for our good. Abraham had already been tested many times, and each time he demonstrated his faith in God and subsequently experienced his personal salvation. So why was this challenge considered so much more difficult than the others he had already faced? Why is it so great that on Rosh HaShanah – the Day of Judgment – we read this story in defense of our very lives?

The answer is that Abraham's challenge had nothing to do with the actual slaughter of his son. He was absolutely ready to perform this faithfully. But God had just said that Isaac would be his progeny and his spiritual legacy. And now He was telling him to kill Isaac. Wouldn't anyone be confused by the conflicting messages he was receiving? But Abraham was made of greater stuff. He did not question God's ability to make one out of two seemingly conflicting things. He was able to rise to the level where faith in God became his personal reality, even when all his senses screamed out, "This is impossible!"

The Torah hints to Abraham's faith in the verse "And he saw the place [of the future Temple] from *afar* ... And he called the name of that place *HaShem-Yireh*, as it is said

to this day, 'In the mount where God is seen'" (Genesis 22:4-14). On his way to killing his son, Abraham saw the future site of the Temple. He understood that the Jewish people would be born and that God's Presence would one day rest there. True, this was very "far" fetched, considering the task he was currently charged with; nevertheless, he strengthened his faith in God and behaved as though he saw God's very promise unfolding before him.

How did Abraham reach this level? By focusing on the "today" and the "now." The exact details of how things were going to work out mattered little to him. God asked him to do something, and he put all his concentration and devotion into fulfilling His request.

Elijah the prophet was asked, "When will you come [to usher in the messianic era]?" He answered, "Today, if you will heed my voice" (*Sanhedrin* 98a). One may ask: Certainly there were many great tzaddikim who completely fulfilled God's precepts; if so, why has Mashiach not yet arrived? Although it's impossible for us to grasp, these great tzaddikim actually did bring the Mashiach. Yes, it is currently being withheld due to the actions of others, but the day will come when their actions will be recalled and we will see that, indeed, Mashiach did come.

Each of us has similar questions. Challenged by various tests, we often we feel we've given it our best, but we don't see our salvation. When will our personal "Mashiach" finally come? Like Abraham, we must be capable of lucidly envisioning our future redemption: yes, the day will come. More importantly, we have to live in the present. The "how" and "when" is in the hands of God, for God is capable of creating one even out of two opposites. But we are capable of focusing on what matters right now, and by living this way, we, too, can make peace out of all our conflicts. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Matanah 5

The Silent Partner

By Chaim Kramer

REB CHAIM KRASSENSTEIN of Kharkhov (a city in eastern Ukraine) was a Breslover chassid who lived in Russia before the Communist Revolution. Reb Chaim was a successful manufacturer, and his business made him quite wealthy.

In the beginning he tithed his income, but as his wealth grew, he began to give 20 percent to charity. He would either send it to Uman (where the largest Breslov community lived at that time), or he would bring it there himself when he joined the chassidim for the annual Rosh HaShanah gathering.

After a time, he declared, “I decided I want to be a 50-percent partner with Rebbe Nachman. Whatever I earn, I am going to consider Rebbe Nachman as my silent partner and divide the income in half – half for the Rebbe and half for myself and my family.”

He fulfilled his promise scrupulously, and to his good fortune, grew even wealthier. At one point, he had so much money that he was afraid to keep it in Kharkhov. He consulted with the chassidim in Uman, and they suggested that just as his “partner’s” money was shipped to Uman, why not keep his own money in Uman as well? After converting his income to gold, he shipped it to Uman, where it was hidden by his friends and held for him.

In 1917 the Communist Revolution changed the face of Russia. Following several years of war and repression, the regime began to nationalize all the factories under the pretense that capitalism took advantage of the workers and it was time to return the wealth to the people.

When they came to Kharkhov, they investigated Reb Chaim’s books and, not surprisingly, concluded that he was making a lot of money on the backs of the common workers. The government ruled to strip him of all his assets and exile him from Kharkhov.

He was ordered to leave the next day and was permitted to take with him only the clothes he was wearing.

Reb Chaim traveled to Uman where he had a fortune of gold waiting for him, and was able to live comfortably for the rest of his life.

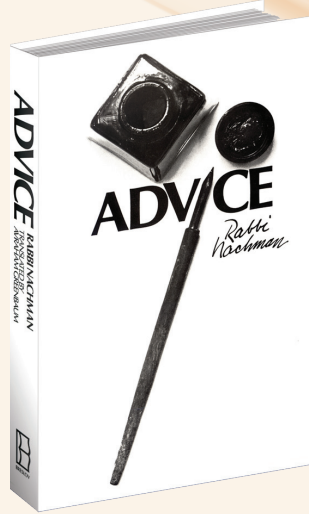
From “More Blessed to Give”

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 25. The deeper a person is sunk in the desire for wealth, the less his understanding and the shorter his days will be. He will never hear the voice of the Torah, which calls on men constantly to return to God. He will be forced to toil for his living, and it will come to him only with great difficulty. But if he strives determinedly to deepen his understanding and think only thoughts of Torah, ignoring his desire for wealth completely, his livelihood will begin to come to him easily and he will hear the voice of the Torah calling and beckoning. The “voice of the Torah” is the good thoughts which rise constantly in a person’s heart with the idea of returning to God. In the end he will be worthy of returning to God in truth (*Likutey Moharan I, 56:5*).

26. The struggle for money is the source of anxiety and depression. But when a person sighs with longing for the holy, moaning out of yearning for God, it helps to rally his strength and revitalize the pulsating spirit within him, bringing new vigor and life. In the end he will attain profound understanding and hear words from Heaven itself (*ibid. I, 56:9*).



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The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman’s chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.